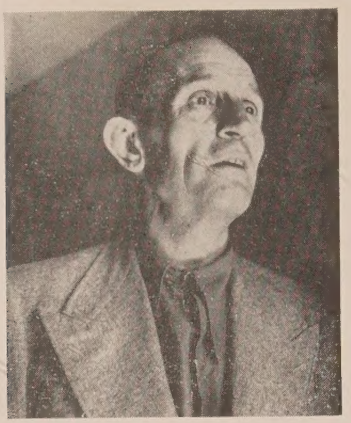
OF GUILT AND HOPE



By
MARTIN NIEMOELLER

One of the few Germans who kept his head above the morass of National Socialism was and is Pastor Martin Niemoeller. In this small volume we are privileged to present Pastor Niemoeller's inspiring appeal to the representatives of his church on the duties of man towards God, state and the stranger in their midst.

Martin Niemoeller does not avoid the issues, does not wish to befog them, nor does he make any sanctimonious pleas for pity on the German nation. His contention is: They are guilty, guilty of crimes they committed and permitted.

He admits that "The guilt of the German people exists, there is no doubt about it; even if there would be no other guilt than that of the six million clay urns, in which the ashes of burnt Jews from all over Europe have been put to rest."

A work of judgment and courageous hope in the belief of a new future for Germany.

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THE RIGHT WAY

MARTIN NIEMOELLER

Of Guilt and Hope

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Translated
By
RENEE SPODHEIM

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"The guilt of the German people exists, even if there were no other guilt than that of the six million clay urns, containing the ashes of burnt Jews from all over Europe."

M. N.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with us all.

Amen.

We hear the word 1. John, 4, 9-14: "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him." Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in Him and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit. And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.

Amen.

Dear Friends! I do not want to begin without a word of thanks. We all met many years ago; in any case, we all know each other. Most of us have already faced each other, and the feeling of belonging together did not leave us during the long years of parting. And the prayer that rose from many hearts to the heart of God, brought consolation and strength to us who had to suffer imprisonment. For that, I wish to say a word of thanks to you; and I know that this will not be enough; we will have to join in giving thanks to God together. That is how we, too, have been strengthened by your prayers.

Most people feel that they become richer, not poorer by giving, even as the poor who are rich unto God. This is one reason for giving thanks; and because we are allowed to be together again we shall commend and praise the Lord; in this spirit shall we proceed with this our reunion. And this glory shall shine over all the things we have to discuss today, for I have been asked to say something about the tasks that lie ahead for the Confessional Church to accomplish.

Indeed it is a tremendous task for a man to point the right way. We know full well that we, the men of yesterday, do not know anything, and our Lord Jesus Christ saith unto us: "I am the way, the truth and the life." He must comfort us in our endeavor to find the right way.

The fundamental things we have to do are obvious; we are no infants at our mother's breast. Has not God shown us the path? We do not need any further guidance; for us, there can be but one endeavor: 11 years ago it was proven that there is only one task, since we, as a Church, have only one Master who cuts out our task, a task which is always today's task since the day Christ departed to heaven and until the day when He will come back among us again. The task is: "Ye shall bear witness." And this is what the Confessional church has been fighting for. Therefore, when we want to be advised on the endeavors and tasks of the Confessional Church, this is what we have to ask: In what way can we carry out the standing order: "Ye shall bear witness," today, in this year, 1946?

For the way of bearing witness changes with the changing times. — Reverend Rau has already told you that the situation of the Church is not what it was twelve years ago. Today, nobody prevents us from bearing witness, rather we are called upon to do it; praised be God that we are allowed to do it, and that this sermon and the testimony can go forth freely and be spread among our people.

But the moment we were free to speak again, we were faced with another problem. The human word has lost its meaning. Where can one find a man who can still believe in words? As a matter of fact, we have learned to think that every word is a lie. We are overfed. And we do not heed words anymore; and all who have something to say, whether Americans, British or French, have to suffer the consequences of our having disregard for the words. And this development brings suffering to everybody, because words are arousing suspicion.

I do not even know whether the Church's testimony of Christ falls into naught.

During the fighting days, each word that

was believed to flow against the tide was of great value. But today, it does not take courage to utter such a word, and the testimony of the word is laden with suspicion even before it is spoken, because it has been misused for such a long time. The Gospel reminds us that in bearing witness to Christ one can never rely on words alone but that it has to be borne out by one's life, as well. God sent his only begotten Son to this world, not that we should make words about Him, but that we might *live* through Him, and, in these our days, the Confessional Church shall indeed have to bear witness to Christ by its own life, if it is to be believed.

Can we do this? Most certainly not by merely saying: Behold, I am a Christian in whose likeness the Lord achieved his masterpiece. No, little would come out of this, for we do not preach ourselves; nay, but we live like the poor who can make many rich, indeed, for we can give a hint, which means more than words, a hint about our Lord Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of this world. That we can do.

A Christian life which is to bear witness

for our Lord Jesus Christ must be a life in which and out of which it appears clearly that we are at peace with God, as Christians. One often quotes those words of Nietzsche: "Christians should look more redeemed, if I am to believe in their Redeemer." There is a grain of truth in this. What distinguishes a Christian from a man who does not have Jesus?

1. We are at peace with God. Are we? — I am thinking of the grumbling that took abode in my heart and then moved out again all through these months, since the day I came home again; and I am thinking of the loud grumbling that spreads among our people and all over Christendom because we had to give our sons and daughters away for this madness, because everything was taken away from us in this development, although we always knew it would come to a bad end; and because our fatherland now is plunged into a state of distress and a morass. Are we at peace with God when we grumble about it? Why is it that our peace falters at every step? Why do men grumble? Behold ye one who grumbleth against his own

sin? When we are not content with God, it is always a sign that God is not content with us and has no cause to be content with us. We think God is unjust towards us, at least that is how we feel when, in reality we are unjust towards Him. Behold ye one who murmureth against his own sin? He sent his only begotten son to bring us peace and forgive our sins.

This should be our starting point, and with this very thing in mind, we have to start in earnest. Nobody wants to take the responsibility of the guilt, no one of our German people is guilty, everybody shoves the guilt over to his neighbor. The local official says: I was only a little man, the whole guilt lies with you, Herr local commander; and he, in turn says: I did not wrong anybody; I only obeyed orders. The whole guilt lies with you, you of the Gestapo. But the latter don't want it either and finally everything lands on Himmler and Hitler. These are the greatest sinners, who cannot throw the guilt on others anymore, even if they did try to do so before their death. Can it disappear into thin air this way? The guilt exists,

there is no doubt about it.

Even if there were no other guilt than that of the six million clay urns, containing the ashes of burnt Jews from all over Europe.

And this guilt weighs heavily on the German people and on the German name and on all Christendom. For these things happened in our world and in our name. Can we of the Confessional Church have nothing to do with it? Can we say that the church triumphed on all the fronts? When Pastor Niemoller was taken to a concentration camp, in 1937, we wrote about it; when the concentration camps were opened, in 1933, we wrote about it; and those who were then put into concentration camps were communists. Who cared about them? We knew about it; it was in all the papers.

Who spoke up? Perchance the Confessional Church? We thought: Communists, those adversaries of religion, those enemies of Christianity — "should I be my brother's keeper?"

The sick ones were then put aside, the so-called incurables. — I remember a con-

versation with a man who claimed to be a Christian. He decided: "This might be right. The state spends a lot of money on those incurable people and they are only a burden to all the others. Is not doing away with them best for everybody?"

And only after that did the attack on the Church itself begin. Then we did have our say, and did so until officially silenced too.

Can we say it is not our fault? The persecution of the Jews, the manner in which we treated the invaded countries, the goings-on in Greece, in Poland, in Czecho-Slovakia, or in the Netherlands, those things we could read about in the papers? That hundreds of hostages were simply lined up against the wall because of sabotage committed by others? Behold ye one who murmureth against his own sin? I think we Christians belonging to the Confessional Church have all the reasons for saying; "My fault, my most grievous fault."

We cannot get out of it with the excuse: I might have had to pay with my life had I spoken out. In my Bible I have read: "Defend the Truth with thine own life." Or

let us think of Luther's words: "Take away body, belongings, honor, child, wife!"

We preferred to keep quiet. We are most certainly not without guilt; and I ask myself over and over again what would have happened if 14,000 evangelical ministers and the Evangelical communities, all over Germany, had defended the truth with their very lives in the year 1933 or 1934, when there must have been a possibility? If we had said then that it is not just for Herman Goering simply to throw 100,000 communists into concentration camps to perish?

I can imagine that 30 to 40 thousand Evangelical Christians would have been shortened by a head, but I can also imagine that we would have thus saved 30-40 millions of lives, for this is the price that we now have to pay.

And I believe that, if we now want to start all over again and bear witness for Christ, there is no other possibility than to strive at being at peace with God again, before we start preaching and testifying on His behalf. We have to do penance and never say that the Church triumphed; we

have all refused to serve, even I; for those who remained Christians and defended truth with their lives, those do not bear any heads on their shoulders any more. We owe it to our Redeemer to retrace our steps; otherwise, we will find no peace, and we will go on grumbling, and there will be no testimony.

I can hear the objection: We might risk doing penance before God, but you want us to recognize our guilt before mankind. I once left the divine service myself, after the first world war, because the minister was talking about war guilt. I know how a man feels when he resists. We are told: "Before God, yes; but we refuse to recognize our guilt before men, because they say: We now have the right to punish you."

Nevertheless, we cannot find peace with God if we refuse to confess our guilt to people who suffered because of it. When a child misbehaves, it has to do penance before his mother, and not in his own little corner; the mother expects it. Just as the prodigal son, who does not go to his own little corner, but to the Father and confesses:

"Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before thee." Without this confession, there is no way out. Thus, whenever I chance to meet a Jew known to me before, then, as a Christian, I cannot but tell him: "Dear friend, I stand in front of you, but we can not get together, for there is guilt between us. I have sinned and my people has sinned against thy people and against thyself. I must beseech you, in God's name, take this guilt that separates us and put it away so that we may get together again."

We owe the confession of guilt to these brothers, so that we may really take the way of penance, so that the way be open, the way on which God comes to us with His ever-forgiving love, through his Son, sent to us for the remission of our sins.

The first step must be to seek the way towards peace with God by mending our ways, by confessing our guilt; and we are not seeking it in vain, for God sent His Son for the remission of our sins. And, even if nobody would want to know about our guilt, we must confess it, nevertheless, in order to know what it means to be at peace with God.

—This is the first thing that has to be told today, about bearing witness for Christ. A testimony of Christ, not by words, but by one's life.

2. The other one is: We can bear witness for our Lord Jesus Christ by showing our people and mankind that we live together at peace, or, as the Gospel says, that we love one another. No sermon of the Redeemer can leave man today as he used to be, nor any human relationship as it used to be. Today, we have to prove to our people that we love our brothers, like true Christians, and that we live at peace with our fellow men. We can achieve this confession and this testimony of Christ and turn it into reality by proving our love to our fellow man, by extending a helpful hand to him. And this help is more important today than ever before, because the need is so infinitely greater and so much more interwoven with the most primitive aspects of life and with life itself than it ever was before. We know how need has gained ground and how we are always called upon to help. I know it the better be-

cause of the doubt whether that which we can achieve really matters.

And yet, whoever met our Lord Jesus Christ does not have such doubts, for he does not ask whether his act of love and help is successful, but whether this act be the expression of God's love for us.—We all know the story about the widow's mite. The farthings thrown by the widow in the offering-cup were certainly only a drop on a hot stone, and yet has our Lord Jesus praised this widow, for it was the expression of her love for God, this gift which was all that she had, even all her living and Christ's word appeared in it.

When the Christian families, in Berlin, set aside their first slices of bread to feed the refugees, in the stations, then it can be said: What is a drop on a hot stone? However, when we find out that those people suffer from hunger themselves, that they are even threatened with starvation; then, this deed acquires a meaning that may even gloss over the widow's mite. You know, our Lord Jesus cannot ask us what we cannot do, for He bears our burden and our guilt

and He can fill men with a few slices of bread, just as He fed the 5000. We are not to take care only of the physical needs of people. Here, I can point out the task of the Confessional Church. The Christians, in Berlin, were very happy when 300 tons of potatoes arrived from Wurtenberg for the needy; and although it was only a drop on a hot stone—there were 4 potatoes per head, and it was God's will that they should arrive and not be frozen—it still was a proof of the love of our brothers and sisters in the west. The Berlinese knew that they were suffering with us and that their love was with us. For us, this is testimony of God's love, of His existence. And this means also that we, as a Church, should act on behalf of those men whose soul and spirit have come to the brink of the precipice.

In my community—Berlin-Dahlem—200 men and 20 Evangelical ministers have taken their lives during the first days of the Russian occupation. Such things have never happened before in the history of Christianity. Something of the responsibility which rests upon us becomes thus clearer. How can

we bear witness to Christ in a world which has reached the brink of the precipice? Before our era, circumstances were such that a minister used to know: in this house lies a sick man, here lives a widow whose husband was buried but a few days ago, the situation in this other house requires help. Today, no minister knows anymore where the soul that needs his help is, for the need is so infinitely greater and even if he knew, he could not be everything to all, for he is but a man himself and the need is tremendous. People pass along: refugees, people who have been bombed out of their homes, women whose husbands have now been taken prisoners, perhaps because they were members of the SS, etc. They lose courage, they become limp and tired, these people; and suddenly they are overcome by despair, and suddenly the human being we knew steps over the brink and into the precipice. We do not know how everything will work out.

The task of the Church, of Christendom, is to testify that we live in peace with each other and that we have love for each other, through our Lord Jesus Christ. What else

can this mean than what was once the minister's duty, as a guardian of souls, has now to be borne by many shoulders; that it is a bitter necessity that each Christian should be aware of his responsibility and should put himself at the disposal of his neighbor. How could the ministers look after all those in despair, when there are more than they can visit.

It is not a question of theology, nor of preparing a whole treasure of Biblical vocabulary when we seek these people; a friendly look into sad eyes, the clasping of a discouraged hand, these little things may prove a great help and make the desperate ones feel that they are not alone, that there is some good left in human beings.

I would like to ask of you, who put your trust in God's love, like all of us, to really live this testimony of Christ; that you bear not witness with your lips alone, but in the way you deal with humans, so that they may notice there is kindness and love left in Christians in these times when everything forsakes us, when we despair and are ready to give up life. I believe this living of the

testimony leads to a series of new demands upon the Christians in their reorganization. I know the slogan: "If anything worth while should come to pass in the Church, it has to come through the ministers."

But today such a slogan is worthless, and I wish to say—although I am perfectly aware this too is a slogan—that if anything is to be achieved in the Evangelical Church, it can only be achieved through the militant community that lives the testimony of Christ, while proving that we are actually at peace with each other; a Church is not made by the beautiful sermons of the minister alone; where each Christian in the community becomes aware of and takes his responsibility in earnest, these the Church is. It is a matter of the simplest things. One does not have to be a scholar in Biblical science. It is not a question of discussing important theological problems. It does not matter anymore whether we are Lutherans, Unitarians, Reformed or Calvinists. What matters is that we be at peace with God, not through our actions alone but through the belief that Jesus Christ is our Lord and Saviour. We

have enough theology when we can prove that we are the blessed children of God, even if we must die of starvation. We have to stake everything to make the spiritual community into a living entity.

Therefore, no more Church of the ministers alone; it does not even matter whether we have bishops or not, as long as the testimony of Christ becomes a daily aim in the life of each Christian soul. Our testimony of Christ shall be a life in peace with each other, and not only of each individual Christian with his nearest neighbor; this applies to our people as a whole; it applies also to public life. An error long ago rooted in the Evangelical Church consisted in the belief that the Evangelical Church does not have anything to do with public life. Of course, the Church should not get involved in politics.

The Catholic Church was supporting the Center and required that all Catholics vote this way. Thereby, the Catholic Church prevented its members from any possible discussion with those left or right from the Center. That is why I regret our getting

entangled with a party system again. When a representative of the Right spoke in Berlin, the rows of the Left were always empty and vice-versa. In Germany, such a situation should be considered as a thing of the past.

Our Lord Jesus commanded: "Ye shall bear witness," and meant it for all men. In the concentration camp, I noticed that communists are men too and that one can talk to them of those same things which move a Christian deeply. I am sure that, should those communists know that I am talking somewhere, they would come and listen to my sermon with all of you.

If only the Church would learn to speak in such a way that its voice reach every man! We can not expect that the Church be heard by all men; but she should do nothing that might lead a group of men to shut the door on her on grounds of belief or non-belief.

If the Church had been an official conscience of the people in 1933 or 1934, then she would have achieved what she should have achieved. The task that should be our aim in the Church is that the Church become the official conscience of Christianity.

If there were 500 Christians in a city of 500 men, then, something should be stirred which would remind of God's words: "Peradventure ten righteous shall be found in Sodom and I will not destroy it for the ten's sake." We shall be those 10 righteous if we are at peace with God through our Redeemer's propitiation. We should carry the well-being of our people in our praying heart. To help our people find the right way, that is my wish for the Confessional Church.

I quote: "Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's and unto God the things which are God's." As if God had made a contract with us. The claims of God and of Christianity are summary; they must remain whole. We have to fulfill our duty but we should not forget that this whole world belongs to God, and so do even Caesar and the people. Our Lord Jesus Christ came as one entrusted with power in Heaven and on Earth. We have to represent the official conscience of Christianity among our people, and to help thereby. A task we did not undertake because it was too burdensome.

3. Our Confessional Church must live the testimony of Christ, showing that we are at peace with all men, not only with the men of our own people, but with other people as well, the peoples of the whole world. Today, the German people is not represented in any foreign country anymore. Before, we had German ambassadors everywhere, who represented the interests of the German people and who could speak up for the German people. That does not exist any more. We do not have any diplomats or newspapermen who could write or wire from other countries. We are no longer a state; our sovereignty has been taken away from us. That goes so far that not even the International Red Cross has a German representation any more. The German people has been silenced. However, the Evangelical Church in Germany can talk to the outside world and be heard by the outside world. We can talk to the Christian Churches in North America and the Churches will listen to what we have to say; and we can speak up, not to the Government, but to the Evangelical Church, and our brothers will listen to what

we have to say. Why is that? For two reasons. There is one reason for which we should be especially grateful. I talked about the guilt of the Confessional Church, and God has already not only inflicted His punishment, but has also bestowed His blessing as prize of our not too long effort. We received His sanction because we did try to bear witness to our Lord Jesus Christ during the last 12 years. The fight of the Confessional Church has allowed our Christian brothers, outside of Germany, really to listen to our voice today. And there is another reason. Christians in foreign countries listen today to the voice of the Confessional Church because, on October 18th, 1945, the provisional leaders of the Evangelical Church recognized the guilt, which I mentioned in the beginning before the representatives of foreign Churches as a confession before God, our Lord, and before our Christian brothers against whom we have sinned. The representatives of foreign churches said, as we pronounced our confession of guilt before God and before themselves: "Dear brothers, your

words have shown us that you did not cease to be our brothers in Christ and we recognize that neither can we cease to be your brothers in our Lord Jesus Christ."

And thus did this tie remain and was renewed and strengthened among Christians here in Germany and Christians in America, the Netherlands, France, etc. And thus, from a practical point of view, such a confession of guilt had political consequences. We will have to do the work of slaves, we will have to build again what has been destroyed in Russia, Poland, France, Czecho-Slovakia, etc., and we will not welcome this work, for our ears will be full of the hatred and revenge expressed by those who see themselves wronged, injured, wounded, thrown into misfortune by us. But we will not be just slaves; indeed, we will have brothers who will extend a helpful hand to us, as Christians, and who will admit it. Frightful years, hunger and worries still lie ahead of our people. I do not think we have reached the worst yet. We will not get any help from any foreign government, or any foreign nation: "You did this and that; we have not very much ourselves; first, we have to take care of those from whom you took

away everything. You, Germans, are the last ones." This is sad, especially for one who comes to eastern Germany and sees how the people starve; and yet, our people will be helped too, they will be helped by those men in foreign countries who know they are joined with us in Jesus. And this is the result of our being able to talk to their representatives. We can take our prayers to them from now on. I think the situation is clear.

We are at peace with each other, that is with the entire world. We have the task of making the world notice our bearing witness to Christ, our testifying that Our Lord Christ came into the world for the propitiation of our sins. Whoever opens his eyes can see that the whole world stands in fear of what may come. Men can make war; that is in their power; but the making of peace is not in their power, in spite of all their organizations.

Who frees man from fear? God sent our Lord Christ as the Redeemer of all mankind and our testimony of Christ shall be heard by the whole world and shall become clear to it. And the fact that people in the whole world and in America understand each other and

that there are leaders of American churches who say: "You, Christians of Germany, are nearer to us than the non-Christians in America," is a testimony of Christ that should make the world take heed, and men think: Maybe it is possible that Jesus of Nazareth, Who makes peace among man and man, be "the way, the truth and the life" and may show us the way to peace.

I would like to relate to you an interesting experience of my last years in Dachau, one which has perhaps impressed me most. I was asked to officiate at a divine service for Christmas in 1944. The community was rather strange: a British captain, a Dutch minister of War, two Norwegian ship-owners, a Serbian diplomat, a Macedonian newspaperman and Martin Niemoller. It was my task to preach the testimony of Christ to men belonging to nations which considered our people as criminals. How can I get along with these people? Will they even participate of the divine service? They will say to themselves: we do not want to have anything to do with you, Germans; we do not mix with you, criminals. I had however prepared a sermon. On Decem-

ber 24th, 1944, the Dutch minister of war came over to me and said: "We have an important request to make, which might seem strange. Would you extend the holy communion to us, tonight, during the divine service?"

And then, after my sermon, we all celebrated holy communion together. We were allowed to celebrate Maundy-Thursday together again and there was a testimony for Christ in the fact that Britishers, Dutch, Norwegians, Macedonians and Serbs were celebrating holy communion with a German, proving thereby that we, as members of Christ's body, belong together and no guilt can tear us apart from this community of peace.

It is also God's wish that such a testimony for Christ ring out in the whole world, through the Confessional Church. And something else; I believe that in this new alliance with the Christians abroad, we, the German Christians, are not only the poor, but, as time goes on, we will be proven to be the rich. I am convinced that, we follow in earnest Jesus' instruction to bear witness for Him, then we

might, as a Christian Church, administering to our wretched and calamity-stricken people and fatherland—and we wish to say this in all humility—we might render a service to humanity as a whole, namely, bearing witness of our Lord Jesus Christ as the One sent by God for the propitiation of our sins, a testimony which should be heard not only by our people, but by the Churches of other countries, as well, for they need it too.

On my night-table, in Berlin, lies a book which contains the 52 best sermons of the year 1944, in the English tongue. It is an American book with wonderful sermons of the Catholic, Protestant and Jewish churches; sermons, expressing wondrous thoughts, plunging into the present, yet not flat; but one thing is completely absent, the word "guilt". Two or three stories deal with the war, mostly bearing upon Germany. The words guilt or sin appear very seldom in the other forty-eight sermons, let alone the words propitiation or forgiveness. Christ appears in those sermons as a great Teacher, but one thing He is not: the Redeemer of the sinful, that which He should be and wants to be.

In 1936, a Bible student told me: "I love

our Lord Jesus Christ with all my heart, but I have nothing to do yet with sin and grace." All right, as long as it says, not yet! But we, as Christians, must recognize our Redeemer. This is the testimony of Christ needed by the whole world; otherwise, everything is dead and choked up with sand. Our Evangelical Church is given the opportunity to hear and to spread again the message of Christ, in all its richness and all its power.

It may be that God, whose power thrives in the weak, wishes to use our Chruch again to let this message ring out loud once more, saving people, and lifting them from death into life. The Confessional Church should beware of becoming a Church of ministers, a Church for superficial things, even when they seem profound; she should see to it that the testimony of Christ as the Redeemer of our sins is applied in our own lives, and that making peace with God be apparent in the relations among men and in the love toward those who need our testimony and seek our testimony.

A LETTER

Leoni, November 10, 1945

Rev. Wilhelm Niemoeller
Bielefeld, Germany.

Dear Brother:

You ask me how I see the future position of our Evangelical Church in Germany, broaching, this way, a subject which has preoccupied me day and night since my return from captivity.

All that has been done hitherto are only small attempts to clear away but scantily the disorder and disorganization which survived by the Hitler regime. The "German Christians" disappeared, the hitherto "Neutral" remained and seized power outright, the "Confessional Church" joined, in many places, the provisional administration of the

Church, and a number of new bishops have been invested who govern and organize their church domain more or less according to the Nazi Fuehrer's principle.

Finally, a new (provisional) Administration of the Evangelical Church in Germany, whose acting Chairman I am, has been set up, in Treysa. You know the names of the twelve leaders: Provincial Bishop Wurm, Chairman; then myself; Provincial Bishop Meiser, Bishop Dibelius, Dr. Lilje, Superintendent of Churches Held, Niesel, Asmussen, Provincial Bishop Hahn, Prof. Smend, Dr. Heinemann, Dr. Meier-Altena.

A number of provincial state churches have not been reorganized as yet. Among them: Baden, Pfalz, Nassau-Hessen, Mecklenburg, Braunschweig and Theuringen. But a reorganization of these districts will take place in the near future.

However, everything that has happened until now and everything that will be done in the following months is consistently considered as "temporary". A permanent organization can only be attained when a legal foundation for a permanent order is given the Church,

through general elections. But this is certain to take months, maybe even a year or more.

The present temporary situation carries with it the danger that the voice of the community may not reach us; in reality, the community is not represented at all at the moment, as it will not be until the elections take place. It is therefore of the utmost importance that the fraternal boards of the Confessional Church and of the communities should continue in existence and enforce the voice of the community wherever possible or necessary. Obviously, it is very often necessary, for the influence of the leading group in the Church is overwhelming. That is why I regret that we do not seem to know any better than to enthrone new bishops at this moment!

The final administration will have to deal with three important problems, if I may say so; and the first of them may be resolved without even the participation of the Church.

First: The problem of the relation between Church and State.

Second: The problem of the Confessional Church.

Third: The problem of the internal organization of the Church.

I would like to develop for you a few ideas on those three questions.

Church and State

The question is to decide whether the Evangelical Church in Germany is to become a State church; whether it should have loose ties with the state; or whether it should become a free independent Church.

This question will, of course, be decided mainly by the state, as represented by the occupational forces. In Hitler's Germany, the Church actually belonged to the state, in as much as it was not allowed to do anything without its formal consent. The return of such condition seems almost impossible now, unless the relations of Church and state in Russia should develop along these lines, in which case the consequences will be felt accordingly in the German territory occupied by Russia. For the time being, however, such a possibility seems remote since the Russian occupation forces in Germany appear to con-

fine themselves to the normal legitimate control of the Church.

Likewise, there is no noticeable tendency towards creating a state-church in the English zone, and even less so within the American occupied boundaries, where it appears positively impossible.

The hitherto prevailing system of provincial state churches, related to the state solely by a sort of public law, is still legally in existence. This form of rule provides for religious education in schools and the right to levy internal Church taxes with state approval.

The occupation forces so far have not encroached on these fundamental principles. But the right to religious education in schools did not remain unchallenged. In the German territory occupied by Russia, religious education is not considered a required subject any more. The religious education of the youth is considered the Church's concern alone; and as such, schools do not have to include it in their curriculum anymore, nor do they have to provide room for its teaching. The parents of children above 14 years of age have to register at their parish if they want their

children to receive religious education, and they may cancel their registration at any time. It might be of interest to mention that a similar procedure has been adopted also in the territory occupied by the Americans.

We must face the fact that the Americans, who recognize merely the right of assembly for their own Church, will show a strong tendency to do away with the hitherto prevailing organization of provincial churches. Then, of necessity, we will have a "Free Church". The old administration of the Church will strongly oppose such a development, which would be truly revolutionary—be it only because the old system insured financing of the church's expenses, through taxes levied in the form of contributions, which would be automatically abolished. Undoubtedly such a reform will cause much perturbation and will be followed by considerable decrease in the number of parishes. On the other hand, such a development would carry with it the abolition of much that is not only old, but which has become corrupt. The whole superficial division of our Church into provincial state churches, with bound-

aries which do not owe their existence to any religious necessity, would disappear. Today, when people have been thrown into confusion through waves of refugees and large-scale shifts in population, the need of such an abolition is felt more than ever.

In my personal opinion, the provincial state churches are willy-nilly, on the verge of crumbling: they only reap now what they sowed during the last twelve years, when they were solely protecting their own existence, and kept silent while others suffered and fought. How new church zones would arise can not be foreseen as yet. We might decide on smaller dioceses, easier to serve, somewhat like the Catholic bishoprics. I am absolutely sure that a completely independent church is, even for Germany, the church of the future and what she will gain in vitality will compensate for whatever she may have to give up in "Influence".

Denominations

The Barmen declaration will set the way for all future Evangelical churches in Ger-

many, whether they be national, regional or free. In addition, however, there still remain in existence here and there, the old reformed denominations, such as Lutheran or Calvinist, and, of course, there will be a great number of communities which will want to cling to their Unionist catechism. In this lie the main difficulties to the future development, not because these problems ask for an immediate solution, but because the provincial churches will want to keep their independence by stressing the question of their belief. From my experience throughout Germany, and even in Bavaria, I can say that the God-fearing, church-going layman knows nothing of the differences between the reformed denominations and that he either wants nor considers necessary any disunion within the Evangelical Church. I share this conviction. The denomination should continue to exist, and each community should keep its denomination. But they should not consider nor treat their Evangelical brethren of other denominations as not belonging to the community. It is hardly possible that a Lutheran community would deny Holy Communion to a Calvinist

brother unto Christ, when the latter does not have the possibility of joining a Calvinist community on the very spot. And that will be the rule rather than an exception in this muddle created by so many refugees from all over! This situation had taken an even more acute form in concentration camps: I officiated before a community of Lutherans, Calvinists, Anglicans, Orthodox, and administered and distributed the Sacrament, as a Lutheran minister, in the Lutheran way, and it was all right. Never again will I give up this right, which became my duty.

One might build a Lutheran, a Calvinist, and one or several Unionist pillars into the future structure of the Evangelical Church of Germany, but not three or more different and separate Protestant Churches, so that nobody knows any more where an Evangelical Christian might claim right of churchly citizenship.

In reality, ours are not separate Churches, in spite of any theological allegation intended to persuade us to the contrary; and if we were only to admit into our synods at least fifty per cent laymen, instead of considering

it an all-minister Church, then, we would soon find out what Christians really think. The main impediment lies with the so-called Lutheran provincial recognized Churches, and it is not by mere chance that these very Churches are the ones earnestly seeking to eliminate the community, that is, the voice of all Christian laymen, from Church life and to propagate, instead, the Episcopate that is, to consolidate interdiction of the community for all time. I am not concerned with the creation of a great exclusive Evangelical Church, which could represent and mean something; but I am indeed concerned with the tribulation of the Evangelical Christians, who have prayed, believed, fought and suffered together, who know they are brethren unto our Lord Jesus Christ, and who are now to be separated again, in the name of "theology." This is being perpetrated by people who prayed, believed, fought and suffered much less.

But it is time to put an end to this, without allowing myself to become bitter. The Church circles, which were fundamentally or practically indifferent, when they should

have professed their faith, should finally retire to the background; but strange as it may seem, these are the very ones who do not want to know anything about mending their ways; they do not even want to admit that they disavowed; they have done wrong. They miss every opportunity to profess the faith they disavowed; but the faith of the "Fathers'" is defined by them in a way that would lead one to believe the true faith was created in Hanover and Bavaria!

Church Organization

The Confessional Church was never a ministers' Church; it was, from the very beginning, a Church of a brotherly organization and brotherly life. This was set forth in the fraternal boards of the community and in synods. We can not and do not want to surrender this right. National Socialism bestowed upon us a new type of bishops, that is Church Fuehrers, who ruled in an unbrotherly and autocratic way; men who have only too often oppressed and reduced to silence the Christians within the Church

and within their pastorate and even delivered them to the Gestapo. We do not want this situation to return. Because of what the Church woke up to during the last year, it has a well-founded distrust for all autocratic Church regimentation, and it is not by mere chance that, among all the new bishops invested here and there by the provisional new order (and that without consulting the community), there is not a single one known to the confessional community, be it only by name. They might stay on, or they might be deposed by the final new order; but the decisive word in the Church must be spoken by the community and not by a single man. It was not by mere accident that the Barmen declaration has been given by a synod, just as it was not by mere accident that the Episcopal words of the last twelve years have, one and all, gone unheard. It may well be that the future will bring us bishops worthier of the name than the dignitaries imposed by Nazism; but there certainly were more good synods than good bishops, and we should follow this modest plan. But it so happens that in our days a

great and momentous task has fallen upon the shoulders of our community, that of fulfilling a missionary duty among our own people. A responsible and vigorous community alone can do justice to such a task.

Therefore, whatever the future organization of the Church may be in detail, it will have to be founded on the community and not on the leadership, that is, on no single man. That is why, in the carrying out of their office, the leading personalities should work in accord with the community and synodal counselling boards, and in no case should we go back to a kind of Episcopal absolutism, such as seems again to be appearing at this moment here and there.

These are the general ideas I have for the future organization of the Evangelical Church in our country. We must be ready to let old customs die out and to dare to make our life as a Church our real goal. We need the kind of love offered gladly and cheerfully by the whole God-loving community to our Christian brother. We need the actual participation of the community in the organization and administration of

the Church: for common as well as a total church life. These are not only my personal wishes, but the wishes that have arisen without our intereference from the suffering and the agony of the Confessional Church, and which will have to be decided upon at the next Church elections.

In my old faithfulness

Your brother

Martin.

1934

ADVENT

Grace be up to you and peace, from Him who is and who was and who is to come!

Dear Community!

"Rejoice greatly; shout! — He shall speak peace. — I have sent forth thy prisoners. —Hope even today!"

—Zechariah

Can those words mean us? Can we hear them altogether? I do not mean to perceive them with our ears, but with our heart, to such an extent as to grasp their message and to let it take possession of us, so that we may really begin to thaw inside and to experience something like joy?!

It can not be concealed, and it would be of no avail to do so: we are tired and worn

out; we have heard enough words, more than enough, nothing but words; and now we want to have our own say, only once, and then we will keep quiet, and we use the words of the Prophet Jeremiah: "We looked for peace, but no good came; and for a time of health, and behold trouble!"

No, we have nothing else to say, and neither have others anything to tell us. We have enough of all this, we are sick and tired of it. And so we are in the midst of the great, dangerous Silence, which is so full of temptations; we have but one ear for the voices of the other world: for the voice of the devil, (and today it can be heard everywhere) or for the voice of God, which is not to be heard anywhere, but only in His word. And His word must first open our ears so that we might then behold it in Nature and in History, yes, even in the conduct of our own lives.

And it is God who spoke the word that we have just perceived, and if we do not want to fall prey to the devil, who today runs around again like a roaring lion seeking such prey, then we would do well to

listen to God's word. This is all the more important since it concerns the very things which worry and drive us inwardly: how shall we, at last, get real peace? How to put an end to this eternal massacre and stinging; this hatred and this envy? How shall men learn at last to live with each other and for each other, instead of living against each other?

"God does not care about thee," that is what the tempter whispers in our ear, and he points to the fact that the entire human history was a history of wars, that such a catastrophe as the one we are now living, or a similar one, has always been relieved by another one. Do you still wish to believe in the fairy tale about God? Are you still waiting for God and His help? Even if there really were a God, He is certainly not the God of Love, of whom you dream; for how would He suffer to see you jump from one calamity into the next, that you should bring upon yourselves the slaying of one another?!

That is what the tempter tells us today; but yesterday he was talking otherwise,

then, he used to say: Do you want to be slaves forever and be oppressed by others? Do not believe what the clerics tell you, that war is disaster, punishment, tribulation and the whip of God; for us, war is the proof of our strength as a people and our readiness for sacrifice, as a nation! He lies today, as he lied yesterday, for he is and remains the father of all lies.

No, God does not want war. His commandment his unmistakably clear before us who know his word, and here it is: "Thou shalt not kill!" And again: "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house," "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbor's." And our Lord Jesus Christ has interpreted God's commandment for us: "Whoever is angry with his brother without cause is in danger of the judgment," and Jesus blissfully praised love of peace.

Whoever makes God responsible, does not know God's word or does not want to know it!

After all, are we Christians not partly

to blame for these eternal wars? This is another question. And this question cannot be so easily discarded. It has been truthfully noticed that up to our day the Church has seldom uttered a word, stating clearly that wars are means forbidden and hated by God for the attainment even of the highest and most justifiable goals; it may be as truthfully recalled that Christian Churches, throughout the ages, have always consented to bless war, troops and arms and that they prayed in a very un-Christian way for the annihilation of their enemy.

All this is our fault and our fathers' fault, but obviously not God's fault. And to think that we Christians of today are ashamed of the so-called sect of the serious scholars of the Bible, who by the hundreds and thousands have gone into concentration camps and died because they refused to serve in war and declined to fire on human beings. In this, as in many other things, we should understand that we, Church and Christians, are the ones to be called today to atone for and change our ways if we want to continue to spread

God's word and represent the cause of God! So, we became accomplices in men's attempt, without seeking the help of God, to organize the peace all humanity craves.

This longing remains; it cannot be eradicated, and the whole world waits for someone to come and gratify this yearning. That happens after each great war, and it does today, especially with us, who have thirty years of suffering behind us, — and who knows how many more ahead of us. How can we, at last, achieve calm, peace and harmony?

All human peace programs suffer of a common basic ill. We do not know any better than to choose, as a last resort, to prevent violence with violence; and to avert coercion by using much stronger coercion.

And we try to be happy and thankful if we succeed to limit this evil in this way at least, and to keep it within half-way bearable boundaries; but we should not imagine that any fundamental change can be brought about thus, the main evil being that everybody wants to push through, even

at the other's expense; we would be blind if we did not see that; what else makes life today so unbearably difficult and cheerless? Rather, is it not the great and small everyday evils, because greed and lack of love are everywhere rampant and poison our lives? And in the midst of all this, how can we hope for a lasting peace and an enduring change for the better?! We live in a time, when much is said and written about love, but all of it entirely loveless.

God wants peace. But in order to fulfill this wish, He needs another kind of people than ourselves. The commandment: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor" does not make different men of us and that is why all God's promises in the Old Testament aim at conveying His wish to write the commandment of love in our very hearts, so that love may become a reality and that this reality may rule our lives. And the Angels' Christmas message announces the fulfillment of this promise: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

Without God there is no love and no

harmony, and therefore no peace; Hence "The ungodly shall know no peace," says the Lord. And this is the joyful message, which is meant for the whole world and which we have to proclaim to the whole world. We are not the only ones who have a full measure of hatred and grievances, and bloodshed and crimes — that means little and avails nothing — but God has enough, and has had more than enough for a long time. He wants things to work out otherwise and He will Himself accomplish what our strength alone cannot achieve. "And I will encamp about mine house because of the army; for now have I seen with mine eyes."

We deem it easy for God to smash the bow of strife and to impose peace; it is enough for Him to speak his almighty word: "The Lord hath spoken it and performed it."

However, God does not choose this way, He is not concerned with a world that functions well nor with people who yield to his mighty word, no matter how reluctantly. He wants us men to get on well with one an-

other with all our hearts and he wants us to set ourselves to work to put order in our life together and in the world at large. God wants another kind of men, and thereby nips evil at its very root.

So, He held out the promise of his King of Peace, who is in everything the exact opposite of an earthly despot, and we know the one in whom this promise has been embodied: Jesus Christ.

His kingdom is not of this world; for his reign starts in the hearts and souls of men, and his kingdom does not rely on force: "Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass."

There can be no lasting peace, nor true understanding among us men without justice. There can be no other way, if we want to be united, than to expose injustice, which creeps upon us, setting us apart. This is the first thing Jesus does to us. He is God's last and greatest prophet, and He puts the commandment, in all its holiness, before our eyes in His teachings and especially in the Sermon on the Mount. And, what is more,

He is himself the embodiment and the fulfillment of the holy will of God. Who among you can accuse me of lying? "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me." This sharpens our conscience more than anything else; it makes us see our sins so clearly and glaring that we do not feel any more like reproaching others for their sins; it makes us realize that the atonement and the change of heart that Jesus asks for has to begin with us the very first ones. And the first barrier separating us from our fellow men falls; in any case we stop pushing the question of guilt around as to who should recognize and confess his wrong-doing first, before we can be united.

Jesus is the Righteous and before Him we confess our guilt. But, and, this comes next, He does not condemn us for our sins; for He is not only the Righteous, entitled by this very fact to pronounce judgment upon us; He, Who can see through our guilt, brings us, as a Comforter and Redeemer, the word of forgiveness: "Thy sins are forgiven." This remains the greatest word that lips have ever uttered. And words are not all.

He ended and sealed His mission with His death on the Cross, His blood, "shed for many for the remission of sins." And this shatters the other obstacle to peace and understanding among us men. There is no peace without forgiveness; that is as true in the life of nations, as it is in the small, simple relations of everyday life: among families, as well as friends; and he who is forgiven by us shall and can practice forgiveness!

This shows the way to peace on earth; and this way is called justice and forgiveness, for that is why our King of Peace came to us as the Righteous and the Comforter. Atonement and mercy, these are his gifts; He is neither judge, nor is He a reformer; He does not compel anybody under His rule, He comes without any claim to power, "poor and sitting on an ass's colt."

Thus Jesus entered Jerusalem; the man who had nothing to lay his head upon; the man abandoned by all his friends, when the test came. Yes, He was poor, He had nothing but what God had given Him — and that

is little in the eyes of men. Jesus did not bring forth a golden age, like his contemporary, Emperor Augustus. But he brought God's love to this world. He preached of it, He lived it, He testified to it, while dying; and since then, the world has not been the same.

Now, our conscience bothers us men when we are without love; for we live under a new commandment. It sounds exactly like the old: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself"! And it is new, nevertheless, for it is not a commandment that comes to us from the outside: You shall, or woe betide thee! It is much more, it is the gift of this "'poor" man; that is what I am bringing you, God's forgiveness and love; and now be without love, if you can! But we cannot; that is the testimony of Christendom. Christ's love penetrates us. Those who belong unto Christ, cannot be without love; and if we be without love, dear friends, it is an infallible sign that we have forsaken Him.

This is how God fosters peace and conquers the lack of peace in the depth of our

heart, so that there simply remains no room for our selfishness and our partial sense of justice, which always bears discord, envy, hatred and strife. And this way we are freed from the prison in which we had locked ourselves up; but we cannot get out of it without help; freed, thanks to the blood of the New Testament, freed by the sacrifice made for us by the Righteous and the Comforter, for us, the unjust and the helpless. In this lies our hope, given not only to us, but to the whole world; this is the fortress where we should find shelter. And here is the message wherefor we celebrate Advent, and which should be spread further: God comes to us into this world in Jesus Christ as love bearing justice and practicing forgiveness, so that we be God's children and live in harmony. This is His peace program, and it is the only promising one, the only one with a future, because it goes to the very root of evil!

And here lies our great responsibility: It might easily seem long to our impatience, and, measured in time, it might easily seem as if God's work will not move

forward at all, nay, even as if it would move backwards. But God comes through Christ at any time and to any man, even today, and even to us, for He wants every man to receive forgiveness and he wants all to come to know the Truth. Nobody is to think that God's concern with us is at an end; it is always new and any moment man might be called upon to receive His King of Peace and to make ready to receive Him: "Turn you to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope."

God's people, Christianity, has been harangued; God's work starts with them. In them, peace becomes reality, the peace brought by Christ with justice and grace, with an appeal for atonement and a word of forgiveness.

This peace begins as the peace of each and every heart which knows of God's love; but it is not confined there: it becomes Christian brotherhood in Jesus' community and it should and will spread like a stream: "and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the end of the earth." It is a great moment

for the Christian Church, indeed, when humanity asks for peace, as it does today, then we are faced with a great opportunity, aye, also with a great temptation.

What could not the Church mean today, if she were to declare herself solidly with the aims and intentions of the occupation powers, and if she were to succeed thereby to gain an influence on education and on public opinion, an influence never before equalled in bygone centuries? What could the Church accomplish, if she were to become the champion of our German people's likes and dislikes, if she were to acquire the love and support of all honest and decent Germans? We hear from all sides: Endeavor to create a strong, influential Church, able to broaden her opportunities.

Such thoughts and suggestions are often fundamentally well meant; but a powerful Church? How can we apply such human thoughts to God and His work. They are deeply imbedded in our flesh and blood.

But here flesh and blood avails nothing, except through God's spirit: "If any man

have not the spirit of Christ, he is not of His."

Christianity does her duty in His name; she is concerned, just as He is, with a new man; and in this spirit, she brings Christ's message of God's love, which calls humanity to conversion and faith.

We do not have anything else to give than what this "poor" King of Peace brings in coming to us. And while serving Him, if we succeed to bring a spark of love in the midst of this world of hatred, and prove that we ourselves bow before God's justice, and do not endeavor to judge other men; that we live mostly in God's forgiveness and practice forgiveness, not retaliation, then will we belong to those "poor" among our Redeemer's followers, who, as the Apostle says, number many rich.

This is the contribution that Christianity can make to help in the realization of a tortured humanity's longing for peace, this is the gift contributed by Jesus Christ's Church, so that we all may be saved from the hell of discord: new men, who do not

think of themselves, but of the others, of that which might help others. But this gift and this contribution are not of our doing, they are God's gift, brought to us by this Man from Nazareth, His Son.

And so, the Church, which is Jesus Christ's community, celebrates His Advent, His coming; therefore, our first concern should be to be ready and open for His work, in which and through which others may receive His wondrous double remuneration; His justice for our sins; His help, in our corruption, God's love, which makes us into new men. Yes, "Rejoice greatly, oh daughters of Zion; shout, oh daughters of Jerusalem; behold thy King cometh unto thee."

An Interview With Martin Niemoeller

Taken by an American Army Chaplain

—What precisely was the charge the Nazis brought against you?

—The Nazis, and especially Hitler himself, were furious about my daring to claim an official influence of the Church and of Christianity on the German people. I know that Hitler's wrath against me personally goes back to January 25th, 1934, when, during a conference between himself and about 30 leaders of the Church, and which took place in Hitler's Chancery, I managed to have the last word. I told him, after a violent discussion: "We will not stop watching over our people and nobody, not even yourself, will be able to deprive us of this responsibility."

—And what was the real motive underlying your imprisonment?

—Much can be said about it. The bill

of indictment included over 50 pages, with quotations from sermons, addresses and letters. In addition to Hitler, several of his colleagues, such as Rosenberg, Goebbels, Kerrl and Ley, considered themselves wronged. I think the concrete and final motive was provided by the Memorandum at the end of 1936, endorsed by the fraternal Board of the Confessional Church and containing a series of grievances, such as concentration camps, education of the youth, persecution of the Jews, etc. From then on, it became clear to Hitler that the Confessional Church would not retract her objections and that she could not be forced into submission.

—Does that mean that the Confessional Church took a stand against the concentration camps, the persecution of the Jews, etc.?

—Yes, she stated her attitude clearly, even before Hitler.

—On what issues have you protested publicly against the Nazis?

—The bill of indictment would provide the completest answer to this question. I

pointed to the falsified Church elections, to the lies of Goebbel's propaganda, on the systematic destruction of Church and of church life, to the persecution of the Jews, to the education of party members and leaders, inciting them to enmity towards the Church, the Bible and the Christian way of life; and I tried to show in my sermons how all this was bound to lead our country and people to ruin. A volume of my sermons has been published in the United States, under the title "God is My Fuehrer". This collection gives a fairly good idea of the kind of sermons I preached during the years 1936-1937.

—Why didn't Hitler put you to death?

—He did not dare! He was afraid of the people, because he knew that would give way to too much public animosity. At least in the beginning. As the war progresed, I think Hitler simply forgot about me. I was Hitler's personal prisoner; therefore, nobody could touch me without a special order from the "Fuehrer."

—Did you ever regret your stand?

—No, not for a moment through all those years.

—What parts of the Holy Scriptures or of your Christian faith meant most to you during your imprisonment?

—The epistle to the Philippians, the Prophet Jeremiah and Paul Gerhardt's Lieder; besides, several prayers from the Roman Breviary.

—To what extent did your faith change during those eight years in prison?

—My faith did not change in any way; but something became very clear to me, namely that faith and love originate from the same source and that a weakness in faith corresponds to a weakness in love. Another experience was the discovery of the incomparable might of faith, which appears in the most discouraging situations. —"If God be for us, who can be against us?"

—When was your faith submitted to the hardest test?

—When a young SS, condemned to death on charge of homosexuality, came to me and asked me to confess him and to

offer him holy communion in secret. Then I became aware of the terrible abyss in which humanity had fallen. This was the dreariest moment my soul has known. I almost felt that everything was lost.

I administered communion to the young man, that being my first ministration in almost seven years of imprisonment.

—Is it true that some of the highest Nazi officials were Christians?

—That is not true. I do not know a single high Nazi official who was a Christian.

—Did you say to American reporters, after being set free: "Don't dare say that Niemoeller has been liberated"?

—No, I did not have any reason for so saying and never said it.

—Are the Germans responsible for the war and national socialism?

—They are responsible insofar as they allowed Hitler and his party to seize power. In general, they did not want war —that is why it started without any enthusiasm — but the people were too soft to offer proper resistance. I must add that the Confessional Church held divine serv-

ices, praying for peace, at the very beginning of hostilities, and that ministers were arrested for doing so. It should be known that I was asked in December, 1944, by a high official of the Gestapo: "Why did not the Church ever pray for victory during this whole war?"

—May it then be stated that the German Church did not pray for victory?

—Some ministers must have done so, of course, but, in general, it can be said that the German Church did not pray for victory. When I heard this, I was proud of the Church, because then I knew that she had resisted.

—Should the German people be punished at all for the war?

—The German people have already been punished by God; their young men and the old ones died at the front and at home; their cities and villages, and everything that was in them has been destroyed; and the hopes and ideals of all the people have been shattered.

—But what should be done about Goering and the other war criminals?

—Goering and the other war criminals must be punished, no matter what the circumstances. If you do not do that, then the German people will do it.

—Should the world say simply to Germany: "We forgive you" and then start all over again?

—"The world" will not be able to say: "We forgive you," but the Christians all over the world should say that, and they should start all over again with us. Measures of punishment against the people will not help. The Christians in Germany, and many others who start believing in God, know that no human being can punish them more than God already has. As for the others, they would only say: "Taking everything into consideration, Hitler was not the worst that could happen to us." And they would turn to radicalism and to underground propaganda of all kinds. But correcting measures are certainly necessary and beneficial, starting with a new way of educating the youth and with a slow training toward public responsibility. I think, the way would be clear in this direction.

—How could Germany be cured of "militarism"? Can it be cured at all and how?

—I think Germany is cured of it for years to come. The rest must be achieved through Christian education at home and in schools and through spreading Christianity from the pulpit, over the radio, etc.

—Is the leadership and influence of the Church strong enough to constitute a real factor in Germany's reconstruction?

—This question can not be answered as yet. I hope that the influence of the Church will rapidly grow, and this will happen if she decides to take the right way, that is if the leadership of the Church follows in the steps of the Confessional Church in telling the people the truth in matters of guilt, as well as in matters of hope. A beginning was made last week, in Treysa, where all Evangelical Churches in Germany bound themselves to follow the fundamental Declarations of Barmen — the Magna Charta of the Confessional Church of 1934.

—In what way can the American Church help you?

—No help will be needed in the inner

organization of the Church, because the German Church has to find and follow her way by herself.

—Do you think that the influence of the Church in post-war Germany will be different from what it was in pre-war Germany?

—Yes, the Church has now learned that she has a responsibility in public life, a responsibility she did not recognize before. It is because of this blindness — among other things — that the Church did not speak out as loudly and as clearly as she should have. For the Church saw well enough where Hitler was leading the German people, but she kept quiet, because she believed she should not get mixed up in politics, which was most certainly an error, and even a catastrophic error. I think this will not happen again.

1934

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